

A Princess of Mars

By Edgar Rice Burroughs

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Tarzan of the Apes

Illustrations by Irwin Myers

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As we started the high tower a patrol shot down from above, throwing its flaming searchlight full upon my craft, and a voice roared out a command to halt, following with a shot as I paid no attention to the hail. Kantos Kan dropped quickly into the darkness, while I rose steadily and at terrific speed raced through the Martian sky followed by a dozen of the air scout craft which had joined the pursuit, and later by a swift cruiser carrying a hundred men and a battery of rapid-fire guns. By twisting and turning my little machine, now rising and now falling, I managed to elude their searchlights most of the time, but I was also losing ground by these tactics, and so I decided to hazard everything on a straight-away course and leave the result to fate and the speed of my machine.

Kantos Kan had shown me a trick of weaving, which is known only to the navy of Helium, that greatly increased the speed of our machines, so that I felt sure I could distance my pursuers if I could dodge their projectiles for a few moments.

Gradually I left my pursuers further and further behind, and I was just congratulating myself on my lucky escape, when a well-directed shot from the cruiser exploded at the prow of my little craft. The concussion nearly capsize her, and with a sickening plunge she hurtled downward through the dark night.

How far I fell before I regained control of the plane I do not know, but I must have been very close to the ground when I started to rise again, as I plainly heard the squealing of animals below me. Rising again, I scanned the heavens for my pursuers, and finally making out their lights far behind me, saw that they were landing, evidently in search of me.

Not until their lights were no longer discernible did I venture to flash my little lamp upon my compass, and then I found to my consternation that a fragment of the projectile had utterly destroyed my only guide, as well as my speedometer. It was true I could follow the stars in the general direction of Helium, but without knowing the exact location of the city or the speed at which I was traveling my chances for finding it were slim.

Helium lies a thousand miles south-west of Zodanga, and with my compass intact I should have made the trip, barring accidents, in between four and five hours. As it turned out, however, morning found me speeding over a vast expanse of dead sea bottom after nearly six hours of continuous flight at high speed.

About noon I passed low over a great dead city of ancient Mars, and as I skimmed out across the plain I came full upon several thousand green warriors engaged in a terrific battle. Scarcely had I seen them than a volley of shots was directed at me, and with the almost unerring accuracy of their aim my little craft was instantly a ruined wreck, spinning erratically to the ground.

I fell almost directly in the center of the fierce combat, among warriors who had not seen my approach, so busily were they engaged in life and death struggles. As my machine sank among them I realized that it was light or die, with good chances of dying in any event, and so I struck the ground with drawn longsword ready to defend myself as I could.

I fell beside a huge monster who was engaged with three antagonists, and as I glanced at his three faces, filled with the light of battle, I recognized Tars Tarkas the Thark. He did not see me, as I was a little behind him, and just then two other warriors opposing him, and whom I recognized as Warlocks, charged simultaneously. The Thark's fellow made quick work of one of them, but in searching back for another thrust he fell over a dead body behind him and was down and at the mercy of his foes in an instant. Quick as lightning they were upon him, and Tars Tarkas would have been a good deal to his father in short order had I not sprung before his protruding form and engaged his adversaries. I had to contend for one of them when the mighty Thark regained his feet and quickly settled the other.

He gave me one look, and a stare, while touched his lips tips as touch my shoulder, he said:

"I would scarcely recognize you, John Carter, but there is no other upon Barsoom who would have done what you have for me. I think I have learned that there is such a thing as friendship, my friend."

He said no more, nor was there opportunity for the Warlocks were closing in about us and together we

fought, shoulder to shoulder, during all that long, hot afternoon, until the tide of battle turned and the remnant of the fierce Warlock horde fell back upon their throats, and fled into the gathering darkness.

On our return to the city after the battle we had gone directly to Tars Tarkas' quarters, where I was left

alone while the Chieftains attended the customary council which immediately follows an engagement.

As I was awaiting the return of the green warrior I heard something move in an adjoining apartment, and as I glanced up there rushed suddenly upon me a huge and hideous creature which bore me backward upon the pile of silks and furs upon which I had been reclining. It was Woola—faithful, loving Woola. He had found his way back to Thark and, as Tars Tarkas later told me, had gone immediately to my former quarters where he had taken up his pathetic and seemingly hopeless watch for my return.

"Tars Hajus knows that you are here, John Carter," said Tars Tarkas, on his return from the Jeddak's quarters; "Sarkoja saw and recognized you as we were returning. Tars Hajus has ordered me to bring you before him tonight. I have ten thoughts, John Carter; you may take your choice from among them, and I will accompany you to the nearest waterway that leads to Helium. Come, we must start."

"And when you return, Tars Tarkas?" I asked.

"The wild enlists, possibly, or worse," he replied. "Unless I should chance to have the opportunity I have so long waited of battling with Tars Hajus."

"We will stay, Tars Tarkas, and see Tars Hajus tonight. You shall not sacrifice yourself, and it may be that tonight you can have the choice you want."

While we were eating I repeated to Tars Tarkas the story which Solu had told me that night upon the sea bottom during the march to Thark.

He said but little, but the great muscles of his face worked in passion and in agony at recollection of the horrors which had been heaped upon the only thing he had ever loved in all his cold, cruel, terrible existence.

He no longer demurred when I suggested that we go before Tars Hajus, only saying that he would like to speak to Sarkoja first. At his request I accompanied him to her quarters.

"Sarkoja," said Tars Tarkas, "forty years ago you were instrumental in bringing about the torture and death of a woman named Gorava. I have just discovered that the warrior who loved that woman has learned of your part in the transaction. He may not kill you, Sarkoja, it is not our custom, but there is nothing to prevent him tying one end of a strap about your neck and the other end to a wild thorn, merely to test your fitness to survive and help perpetuate our race. Having heard that he would do this on the morrow, I thought it only right to warn you, for I am a just man. The river Iss is but a short pilgrimage. Sarkoja. Come, John Carter."

The next morning Sarkoja was gone, nor was she ever seen after.

In silence we hastened to the Jeddak's palace, where we were immediately admitted to his presence. In fact, he could scarcely wait to see me and was standing erect upon his platform gazing at the entrance as I came in.

"Strap him to that pillar," he shrieked. "We shall see who it is dares strike the mighty Tars Hajus. Heat the iron; with my own hands I



"Heat the Iron: With My Own Hands I Shall Burn the Eyes From His Head."

shall burn the eyes from his head that he may not pollute my person with his vile gaze."

"Chieftains of Thark," I cried, turning to the assembled council and ignoring Tars Hajus, "I have been a chief among you, and today I have fought for Thark's shoulder to shoulder with her greatest warrior. You owe me, at least, a hearing. I have won that much today. You claim to be just people."

"Silence," roared Tars Hajus. "Gag the creature and bind him as I command."

"Justice, Tars Hajus," exclaimed Lorquas Ptomel. "Who are you to set aside the customs of ages among the Tharks?"

"Yes, justice!" echoed a dozen voices, and so, while Tars Hajus fumed and frothed, I continued.

"You are a brave people and you love bravery, but where was your mighty Jeddak during the fighting today? I did not see him in the thick of battle; he was not there. He sends defenseless women and little children in his place, but how recently has one of you seen him fight with men? Why, even I, a midge beside him, felled him

with a single blow of my fist. Is it of such that the Tharks fashion their Jeddaks? There stands beside me now a great Thark, a mighty warrior and a noble man. Chieftains, how sounds, Tars Tarkas, Jeddak of Thark?"

A roar of deep-toned applause greeted this suggestion.

"It but remains for this council to command, and Tars Hajus must prove his fitness to rule. Were he a brave man he would invite Tars Tarkas to combat, for he does not love him, but Tars Hajus is afraid; Tars Hajus, your Jeddak, is a coward. With my bare hands I could kill him, and he knows it."

After I ceased there was tense silence, as all eyes were riveted upon Tars Hajus. He did not speak or move, but the blotchy green of his countenance turned livid, and the froth froze upon his lips.

"Tars Hajus," said Lorquas Ptomel in a cold, hard voice, "never in my long life have I seen a Jeddak of the Tharks so humiliated. There could be but one answer to this arraignment. We wait it." And still Tars Hajus stood as though petrified.

"Chieftains," continued Lorquas Ptomel, "shall the Jeddak, Tars Hajus, prove his fitness to rule over Tars Tarkas?"

There were twenty chieftains about the rostrum, and twenty swords flashed high in assent.

There was no alternative. That decree was final, and so Tars Hajus drew his longsword and advanced to meet Tars Tarkas.

The combat was soon over, and, with his foot upon the neck of the dead monster, Tars Tarkas became Jeddak among the Tharks.

His first act was to make me a full-fledged chieftain with the rank I had won by my combats the first few weeks of my captivity among them.

Seeing the favorable disposition of the warriors toward Tars Tarkas, as well as toward me, I grasped the opportunity to enlist them in my cause against Zodanga. I told Tars Tarkas the story of my adventures, and in a few words had explained to him the thought I had in mind.

"John Carter has made a proposal," he said, addressing the council, "which meets with my sanction. I shall put it to you briefly. Dejah Thoris, the princess of Helium, who was our prisoner, is now held by the Jeddak of Zodanga, whose son she must wed to save her country from devastation at the hands of the Zodangan forces."

"John Carter suggests that we rescue her and return her to Helium. The loot of Zodanga would be magnificent, and I have often thought that had we an alliance with the people of Helium we could obtain sufficient assurance of sustenance to permit us to increase the size and frequency of our battleships, and thus become unquestionably supreme among the green men of all Barsoom. What say you?"

It was a chance to fight, an opportunity to loot, and they rose to the bait as a speckled trout to a fly.

In three days we were on the march toward Zodanga, one hundred thousand strong, as Tars Tarkas had been able to enlist the services of three smaller hordes on the promise of the great loot of Zodanga.

We traveled entirely by night, timing our marches so that we camped during the day at deserted cities where, even to the beasts, we were all kept indoors during the daylight hours. On the march Tars Tarkas, through his remarkable ability and statesmanship, enlisted fifty thousand more warriors from various hordes, so that, ten days after we set out we halted at midnight outside the great walled city of Zodanga, one hundred and fifty thousand strong.

The task of obtaining entry to the city devolved upon me. I took twenty dismounted warriors and approached one of the small gates that pierced the walls at short intervals.

Placing three of my warriors with their faces to the wall and arms locked, I commanded two more to mount to their shoulders, and a sixth I ordered to climb upon the shoulders of the upper two. The head of the topmost warrior towered over forty feet from the ground.

In this way, with ten warriors, I built a series of three steps from the ground to the shoulders of the topmost man. Then, standing on a short distance behind them, I ran swiftly and from one man to the next, and with a final bound I was on the broad shoulders of the highest. I caught the top of the great wall and quietly drew myself to its broad top. After me I dragged six lengths of ladder from an enormous number of my warriors. These ladders we had previously fastened together, and passing one end to the topmost warrior I lowered the other end and fastened it over the opposite side of the wall to a small ledge below. No one was in sight, so, lowering myself to the end of the ladder, I slipped it down the opposite side, fastened it to the wall, and then I was in.

I had learned from Kantos Kan the secret of opening these gates, and I had another moment of twenty great fighting men stood within the doomed city of Zodanga.

I found to my delight that I had entered at the lower boundary of the enormous palace grounds. Disputing one of my men to Tars Tarkas for a detail of fifty Tharks, with word of my intentions, I ordered ten warriors to capture and open one of the great gates while with the nine remaining I took the other. We were to do our work

quietly, no shots were to be fired and no general advance made until I had reached the palace with my fifty Tharks. Our plans worked to perfection. The two sentries we met were dispatched to their fathers upon the banks of the lost sea of Korus, and the guards at both gates followed them in silence.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Looting of Zodanga.

As the great gate where I stood swung open my fifty Tharks, headed by Tars Tarkas himself, rode in upon their mighty steeds. I led them to the palace walls, which I negotiated easily without assistance. Once inside, however, the gate gave me considerable trouble, but I finally was rewarded by seeing it swing upon its huge hinges, and soon my fierce escort was riding across the gardens of the Jeddak of Zodanga.

As we approached the palace I could see through the great windows of the first floor into the brilliantly illuminated audience chamber of Than Kosis. The immense hall was crowded with nobles and their women, as though some important function was in progress. At one end of the chamber, upon massive golden thrones encrusted with diamonds, sat Than Kosis and his consort, surrounded by officers and dignitaries of state. Before them stretched a broad aisle lined on either side with soldiers, and as I looked there entered this aisle at the far end of the hall, the head of a procession which advanced to the foot of the throne.

First there marched four officers of the Jeddak's guard bearing a huge salver on which reposed, upon a cushion of scarlet silk, a great golden chain with a collar and padlock at each end. Then came more dignitaries, and the officers of the palace and of the army, and finally two figures entirely muffled in scarlet silk, so that not a feature of either was discernible. These two stopped at the foot of the throne, facing Than Kosis. When the balance of the procession had entered and assumed their stations Than Kosis addressed the couple standing before him. I could not hear his words, but presently two officers advanced and removed the scarlet robe from one of the figures. I saw that Kantos Kan had fallen in his mission, for it was Sab Than, prince of Zodanga, who stood revealed before me.

Than Kosis now took a set of the ornaments from one of the salvers and placed one of the collars of gold about his son's neck, springing the padlock fast. After a few more words addressed to Sab Than he turned to the other figure, from which the officers now removed the enshrouding silks, disclosing to my now comprehending view Dejah Thoris, princess of Helium.

As the ornaments were adjusted upon her beautiful figure and her collar of gold swung open in the hands of Than Kosis I raised my longsword above my head and, with the heavy hit, I shattered the glass of the great window and sprang into the midst of the astonished assemblage. With a bound I was on the steps of the platform beside Than Kosis, and as he stood riveted with surprise, I brought my longsword down upon the golden chain that would have bound Dejah Thoris to another.

In an instant all was confusion, a thousand drawn swords menaced me from every quarter, and Sab Than sprang upon me with a jeweled dagger he had drawn from his nuptial ornaments. I could have killed him as easily as I might a fly, but the age-old custom of Barsoom stayed my hand, and, grasping his wrist as the dagger flew toward my heart, I held him as though in a vice and with my longsword pointed to the far end of the hall.

"Zodanga has fallen," I cried. "Look!"

All eyes turned in the direction I had indicated, and there, forged



With My Back Against a Golden Throne I Fought Once Again for Dejah Thoris.

through the portals of the entrance, way rode Tars Tarkas and his fifty warriors on their great steeds. A cry of alarm and amazement broke from the assemblage, but no word of fear, and in a moment the soldiers and nobles of Zodanga were hurrying themselves upon the advancing Tharks.

Turning Sab Than headlong from the platform, I drew Dejah Thoris to my side. Behind the throne was a narrow doorway and in this Than Kosis now stood facing me, with drawn longsword. In an instant we were engaged, and I found no more advantage.

As we circled upon the broad platform I saw Sab Than rushing up the

steps to aid his father, but as he raised his hand to strike, Dejah Thoris sprang before him and then my sword found the spot that made Sab Than Jeddak of Zodanga. As his father rolled dead upon the floor the new Jeddak tore himself free from Dejah Thoris' grasp and again we faced each other. He was soon joined by a quartet of officers and, with my back against a golden throne, I fought once again for Dejah Thoris.

Calling to her to get behind me I worked my way toward the little doorway back of the throne, but the officers realized my intentions and three of them sprang in behind me and blocked my chances for gaining a position where I could have defended Dejah Thoris against an army of swordsmen.

The Tharks were having their hands full in the center of the room, and I began to realize that nothing short of a miracle could save Dejah Thoris and myself, when I saw Tars Tarkas surging through the crowd of pignoles that swarmed about him. With one swing of his mighty longsword he held a dozen corpses at his feet, and so he hewed a pathway before him until in another moment he stood upon the platform beside me, dealing death and destruction right and left.

The bravery of the Zodangans was awe-inspiring; not one attempted to escape, and when the fighting ceased it was because only Tharks remained alive in the great hall, other than Dejah Thoris and myself.

Sab Than lay dead beside his father, and the corpses of the flower of Zodangan nobility and chivalry covered the floor of the bloody shambles.

My first thought when the battle was over was for Kantos Kan, and leaving Dejah Thoris in charge of Tars Tarkas I took a dozen warriors and hastened to the dungeons beneath the palace. The jailers had all left to join the fighters in the throne room, so we searched the labyrinthine prison without opposition.

I called Kantos Kan's name aloud in each new corridor and compartment, and finally I was rewarded by hearing a faint response. Guided by the sound, we soon found him helpless in a dark recess.

He was overjoyed at seeing me and to know the meaning of the fight, faint echoes of which had reached his prison cell. He told me that the air patrol had captured him before he reached the high tower of the palace, so that he had not even seen Sab Than.

The sounds of heavy firing, mingled with shouts and cries, came to us from the city's streets, and Tars Tarkas hastened away to direct the fighting without. Kantos Kan accompanied him to act as guide, the green warriors commencing a thorough search of the palace for other Zodangans and for loot, and Dejah Thoris and I were left alone.

She had sunk into one of the golden thrones, and as I turned to her she greeted me with a wan smile.

"Was there ever such a man?" she exclaimed. "Alone, a stranger, hunted, threatened, persecuted, you have done in a few short months what in all the past ages of Barsoom no man has ever done: joined together the wild hordes of the sea bottom and brought them to fight as allies of a red Martian people."

"The answer is easy, Dejah Thoris," I replied, smiling. "It was not I who



I Took Her in My Arms and Kissed Her.

did it, it was love, love for Dejah Thoris, a power that would work greater miracles than this you have seen. I have done many strange things in my life, many things that wiser men would not have dared, but never in my wildest fancies have I dreamed of winning a Dejah Thoris for myself—for never had I dreamed that in all the universe dwelt such a woman as the princess of Helium. That you are a woman does not interest me, but that you are you is enough to make me doubt my sanity as I ask you, my princess, to be mine."

"He does not need to be ashamed who so well knew the answer to his plea before the plea were made," she replied, rising and placing her dear hands upon my shoulders, and so I took her in my arms and kissed her.

And thus in the midst of a city of wild conflict, filled with the alarms of war, with death and destruction reaping their terrible harvest around her, old Dejah Thoris, princess of Helium, true daughter of Mars, the god of war, promise herself in marriage to John Carter, Gentleman of Virginia.

Some time later Tars Tarkas and Kantos Kan returned to report that Zodanga had been completely reduced, their forces were entirely destroyed or captured, and no further resistance was to be expected from within. Several battleships had escaped, but there were thousands of war and merchant vessels under guard of Thark warriors.

(Continued Next Week.)



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TAKE

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